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Why your adaptability quotient is your silver bullet to remaining relevant

You have just lived through one of the most turbulent periods in recent work history. Workplaces and processes have changed. What your organisation expects from you has changed, writes Caroline Kennedy.

April 26, 2021 • By Caroline Kennedy Share

It's hard to keep up. No wonder LinkedIn's research listed adaptability as one of the most in-demand skills for 2020.

What is adaptability quotient?

Canada's Ivey Business School defines adaptability quotient (AQ) as "the ability to determine what's relevant, to forget obsolete knowledge, overcome challenges, and adjust to change in real time".

In her TED talk, writer and former IBM Watson strategist Natalie Fratto said, "We're entering a future where IQ and EQ both matter far less than how fast you're able to adapt. Adaptability itself is a form of intelligence, and each of us has the capacity to become more adaptable."

As our environment keeps changing, adaptability is emerging as a vital skill for leaders to possess. Daniel Goleman, author and expert on emotional intelligence, says, "Of all of the emotional intelligence competencies, strength in adaptability predicts success most often."

Adaptability is a mindset

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Being adaptable means embracing change, accepting change rather than fighting it.

Whether it's adopting the use of digital technology, changing relationships with clients or advisers, or change forced by public pressure, leaders must be open to new ways of doing things.

Changing your mindset isn't easy. Over the years, you've built up strong neural pathways in your brain, which are your thinking patterns. They become so powerful that they automatically kick in when change challenges you. In other words, these pathways limit you and try to keep you safe in the mindset they are familiar with.

Start questioning your thoughts and assumptions. Open yourself to new information by listening more, observing more, and expanding your sources of information.

You can't fight change. All you can do is change the way you think about it. Shifting your mindset from fear and resistance to curiosity and possibility will open a new world to you.

The AQ advantage

Adaptability is the foundation of innovation, creativity, and problem-solving. Companies can't get enough of it.

According to Adaptability University, "research shows 78 per cent of leaders believe their teams do not innovate effectively, while 92 per cent of employees believe their organisation will not survive technological disruption".

These are the reasons some companies miss opportunities and are unable to take advantage of change when it occurs.

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They need leaders who aren't afraid to fail and are always ready to step back up and try something else. They need leaders who are open-minded and willing to take calculated risks when needed. Leaders with low AQ will become expendable. They won't be relevant because they can't adapt.

Leaders with high AQ are the leaders who will drive the company forward. Adaptable leaders aren't just capable of change; they anticipate it. If you are that kind of leader, your future is assured.

Adapt and take control

In my latest book, *Lead Beyond 2030*, I share how tomorrow's great leaders will be adaptable and who can nurture adaptable teams towards innovation and creativity. The starting point for adapting to change is taking control of a situation instead of being controlled by it.

When you are in charge, you are a pioneer. You're a game changer. You look at problems and challenges from different angles to find a solution. You think differently, coming up with new and original ideas or, at the very least, harness the creative power of your teams to forge solutions.

There is an incredible sense of power and confidence that comes with accepting change instead of fearing it.

How relevant are you?

Your AQ matters more than any other metric when disruption surrounds you, when the pressure is on, and the stakes are high. Are you ready to take charge of change? The systems and solutions your company has relied on for years aren't working any more.

If you don't adapt, you'll be as outdated as your systems. Choose your mindset. Choose adaptability and ensure your career longevity.

Caroline Kennedy is the author of Lead Beyond 2030: The Nine Skills You Need to Intensify Your Leadership Impact, and an accomplished chief executive and global thought leader on business and leadership.

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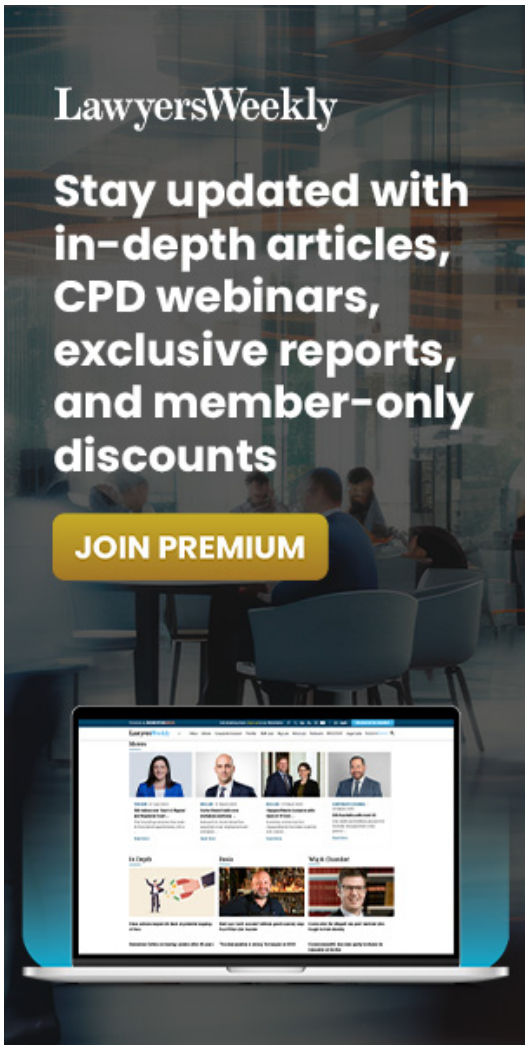
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